

cinematic moral allegory popular culture has produced in decades—perhaps ever.

Interpretations of this central mystery vary. But central to all is a morally complicated and powerful story arc to the main character. When Phil Connors arrives in Punxsutawney, he's a perfect representative of the Seinfeld generation: been-there-done-that. When he first realizes he's not crazy and that he can, in effect, live forever without consequences—if there's no tomorrow, how can you be punished?—he indulges his adolescent self. He shoves cigarettes and pastries into his face with no fear of lovehandles or lung cancer. "I am not going to play by their rules any longer," he declares as he goes for a drunk-driving spree. He uses his ability to glean intelligence about the locals to bed women with lies. When that no longer gratifies, he steals money and gets kinky, dressing up and play-acting. When Andie MacDowell sees him like this she quotes a poem by Sir Walter Scott: "The wretch, concentrated all in self/Living, shall forfeit fair renown/And, doubly dying, shall go down/To the vile dust, from whence he sprung/Unwept, unhonored, and unsung."

Connors cackles at her earnestness. "You don't like poetry?" She asks. "I love poetry," he replies, "I just thought that was Willard Scott."

Still, Connors schemes to bed Rita with the same techniques he used on other women, and fails, time and again. When he realizes that his failures stem not from a lack of information about Rita's desires but rather from his own basic hollowness, he grows suicidal. Or, some argue, he grows suicidal after learning that all of the material and sexual gratification in the world is not spiritually sustaining. Either way, he blames the groundhog and kills it in a murder-suicide pact—if you can call killing the varmint murder. Discovering, after countless more suicide attempts, that he cannot even die without waking up the next day he begins to believe he is "a god." When Rita scoffs at this—noting that she had twelve years of Catholic school (the only mention of religion in the film)—he replies that he didn't say he was "the God" but merely "a god." Then again, he remarks, maybe God really isn't all-powerful, maybe he's just been around so long he knows everything that's going to happen. This, according to some, is a reference to the doctrine of God's "middle knowledge," first put forward by the 16th-century Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina, who argued that human free will is possible because God's omniscience includes His knowledge of every possible outcome of every possible decision.

THE METAMORPHOSIS

The point is that Connors slowly realizes that what makes life worth living is not what you get from it, but what you put into it. He takes up the piano. He reads poetry—no longer to impress Rita, but for its own sake. He helps the locals in matters great and small, including catching a boy who falls from a tree every day. "You never thank me!" he yells at the fleeing brat. He also discovers that there are some things he cannot change, that he cannot be God. The homeless man whom Connors scorns at the beginning of the film becomes an obsession of his at the end because he dies every Groundhog Day. Calling him "pop" and "dad," Connors tries to save him but never can.

By the end of the film, Connors is no longer obsessed with bedding Rita. He's in love with her, without reservation and without hope of his affection being requited. Only in the end, when he completely gives up hope, does he in fact "get" the woman he loves. And with that, with her love, he finally wakes on February 3, the great wheel

of life no longer stuck on Groundhog Day. As NR's own Rick Brookhiser explains it, "The curse is lifted when Bill Murray blesses the day he has just lived. And his reward is that the day is taken from him. Loving life includes loving the fact that it goes."

Personally, I always saw Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return of the same in this story. That was Nietzsche's idea—metaphorical or literal—to imagine life as an endless repetition of the same events over and over. How would this shape your actions? What would you choose to live out for all eternity? Others see Camus, who writes about how we should live once we realize the absurdity of life. But existentialism doesn't explain the film's broader appeal. It is the religious resonance—if not necessarily explicit religious themes—that draws many to it. There's much to the view of Punxsutawney as purgatory: Connors goes to his own version of hell, but since he's not evil it turns out to be purgatory, from which he is released by shedding his selfishness and committing to acts of love. Meanwhile, Hindus and Buddhists see versions of reincarnation here, and Jews find great significance in the fact that Connors is saved only after he performs mitzvahs (good deeds) and is returned to earth, not heaven, to perform more.

The burning question: Was all this intentional? Yes and no. Ultimately, the story is one of redemption, so it should surprise no one that it speaks to those in search of the same. But there is also a secular, even conservative, point to be made here. Connors's metamorphosis contradicts almost everything postmodernity teaches. He doesn't find paradise or liberation by becoming more "authentic," by acting on his whims and urges and listening to his inner voices. That behavior is soul-killing. He does exactly the opposite: He learns to appreciate the crowd, the community, even the bourgeois hicks and their values. He determines to make himself better by reading poetry and the classics and by learning to sculpt ice and make music, and most of all by shedding his ironic detachment from the world.

Harold Ramis and Danny Rubin, the writer of the original story, are not philosophers. Ramis was born Jewish and is now a lackadaisical Buddhist. He wears meditation beads on his wrist, he told the *New York Times*, "because I'm on a Buddhist diet. They're supposed to remind me not to eat, but actually just get in the way when I'm cutting my steak." Rubin's original script was apparently much more complex and philosophical—it opened in the middle of Connors's sentence to purgatory and ended with the revelation that Rita was caught in a cycle of her own. Murray wanted the film to be more philosophical (indeed, the film is surely the best sign of his reincarnation as a great actor), but Ramis constantly insisted that the film be funny first and philosophical second.

And this is the film's true triumph. It is a very, very funny movie, in which all of the themes are invisible to people who just want to have a good time. There's no violence, no strong language, and the sexual content is about as tame as it gets. (Some e-mailers complained that Connors is only liberated when he has sex with Rita. Not true: They merely fall asleep together.) If this were a French film dealing with the same themes, it would be in black and white, the sex would be constant and depraved, and it would end in cold death. My only criticism is that Andie MacDowell isn't nearly charming enough to warrant all the fuss (she says a prayer for world peace every time she orders a drink!). And yet for all the opportunities the film presents for self-importance and sentimentality, it almost never falls for either. The best example: When the two

lovebirds emerge from the B&B to embrace a happy new life together in what Connors considers a paradisiacal Punxsutawney, Connors declares, "Let's live here!" They kiss, the music builds, and then in the film's last line he adds: "We'll rent to start."

MASTER SERGEANT WOODROW WILSON KEEBLE

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, few Americans will recognize MSG Woodrow Wilson Keeble's name, but he was an American hero who served in two wars and who deserves our Nation's most prestigious recognition.

I first became aware of Master Sergeant Keeble's bravery in 2002 after being contacted by members of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe who were requesting that his Distinguished Service Cross be upgraded to the Congressional Medal of Honor. The Medal of Honor is our Nation's highest military honor, and while it is awarded on behalf of Congress, the Department of Defense determines the qualifications and eligibility for the decoration.

Master Sergeant Keeble, a member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, was an Army veteran of both World War II and the Korean War. For his service, he was awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, the Silver Star, and the Distinguished Service Cross.

The last decoration was awarded for his actions near Kumsong, North Korea in October 1951. After many days of fighting in the bitter cold, and though he was wounded, Master Sergeant Keeble single handedly took out three enemy machinegun emplacements.

The first hand accounts of his actions that day read like something out of an old Hollywood movie. What he did was real, and his bravery in the face of enemy fire was so remarkable that the men in his company twice submitted recommendations that he receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. In both cases, the recommendation was lost.

Like so many veterans, Master Sergeant Keeble returned home after the war a humble man, not interested in pursuing medals or personal honors. He died in 1982, and without the dedicated effort of his family and fellow veterans, most of us would have never had the opportunity to learn about Master Sergeant Keeble. Today, there is an ongoing effort to document his actions through the eyewitness testimony of those veterans who served with him. This is a valuable effort and will help preserve an important part of our Nation's history.

After first hearing in 2002 of his heroic actions, I contacted the Secretary of the Army to request a review of Master Sergeant Keeble's case. Based on an affidavit from a member of the company that the original recommendations for the Medal of Honor had been lost, I asked the Secretary to waive the normal 3-year statute of limitations requirement for consideration of the Medal of Honor.

Since that time, I have been in close contact with the Army. The recommendation to posthumously award

the Medal of Honor to Master Sergeant Keeble has been reviewed by an Army Decorations Board, a Senior Army Decorations Board, and now awaits final action by the Secretary of the Army. At this point, I do not know if the Secretary's decision will be positive or negative, but I remain in contact with his office almost every month as I have for the past 4 years.

While all of us who care about this case are frustrated by the amount of time this has taken, the thorough review process is an indication of the importance of the Medal of Honor and the seriousness of this decision.

As more people learn about Master Sergeant Keeble's story, more people are joining in the effort to pay tribute to his service. While I do not know what the Army's ultimate decision will be in this case, I can think of no one more deserving of this honor than Master Sergeant Keeble.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID EVANS

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I today pay tribute to David Lee Evans, who had been a member of the staff of the Committee on Foreign Relations. He was a much loved Senate employee who was universally respected for his professionalism, patience, and generosity. Dave passed away last week at age 65.

Dave was born on October 23, 1940, in Baltimore, MD. He graduated from Kenwood High School, and attended Howard Community College. Dave served the Government as a journeyman printer and as a member of the Foreign Relations Committee staff for nearly 23 years. In addition to his service as a printer with the Government Printing Office, he had been Chief Clerk and Assistant Chief Clerk to the committee during the 1970's. Dave ably served under Foreign Relations Committee Chairmen Fulbright, Sparkman, Church, Helms, BIDEN and myself.

Committee members and staff relied heavily on Dave to shepherd our many publications through all aspects of the printing process. As a returning chairman in 2003, I brought in a new majority staff, many of whom were working for a Senate committee for the first time. Dave was indispensable in teaching these staff members committee printing procedures and patiently answering their many questions. Dave's skills, technical ability and good humor made it possible to meet our many deadlines.

During the last 6 years that Dave served the committee, we printed more than 400 documents, including executive and legislative reports, hearings, and other materials. Without Dave's tireless efforts and hard work, the committee would not have been able to produce such a huge volume of material. Dave took great pride in his work and ensured that the material he produced met his and the committee's high standards. Every publication Dave printed reflected favorably on the committee, the Senate, and the U.S. Government as a whole.

In addition to his extensive public service, Dave will be remembered as a loyal friend and loving husband and father. He is survived by his wife Angela, who is currently the Executive Clerk of the Committee on Foreign Relations; four children, David T. Evans, Christopher Evans, Kathleen Canby, and Susan Hennegan; a stepson, Jeffrey Morris; six grandchildren; and a brother.

All who knew Dave will miss his kindness and grace. The thoughts of the entire Foreign Relations Committee are with his family as they remember and celebrate the life of an exemplary man.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I associate myself with the remarks that our chairman, Senator LUGAR, has just made regarding our fine printer David L. Evans, who died last week at the age of 65 after a courageous battle with cancer.

Dave did two tours as a GPO printer assigned to the Committee on Foreign Relations, first in the 1970s, and then again from 1999 until about a year ago. For a time in the late 1970s, he also served directly on the staff of the committee as its deputy clerk and then its chief clerk. The committee, and the country, are indebted to him for his service for performing some of the numerous jobs that are essential to the operation of this institution, but which are largely unrecognized by the public.

Dave was a big and wonderfully gentle man. He reveled in the opportunity to serve his country, even though it meant working long days, and sometimes well into the night, to ensure that the committee's hearings and reports were printed promptly and properly. Why he put up with us I don't know, but it was an honor to have him on our staff, and to know that the published output of our committee had been subject to his careful and professional scrutiny. He was unfailingly courteous and pleasant to his co-workers, and never complained about his heavy workload.

Like so many others in this country afflicted with cancer, Dave was taken from us too soon. We will miss him greatly. Our thoughts and prayers are with all his family and especially his wife Angie Evans, who shared Dave's work ethic and continues to bless us with her service to the committee.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

• Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I today speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate

crime that has occurred in our country.

On May 17, 2003, Sakia Gunn was fatally stabbed during a confrontation about her being a lesbian. Gunn and four other girls were waiting for a bus in downtown Newark, NJ, when Richard McCullough and another man drove up and asked them to go to a party. When the girls responded that they were lesbians, the two men began spewing homophobic insults and McCullough proceeded to stab her.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. By passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.●

ATLANTA GAS LIGHT

• Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Atlanta Gas Light on its 150th anniversary. Atlanta Gas Light was incorporated on February 16, 1856, and first brought lighting to the streets of Atlanta on Christmas Day, 1855, enabling accelerated growth and the safe transportation of individuals and supplies necessary for the expansion of Atlanta and its surrounding communities.

At the end of the Civil War, Atlanta Gas Light quickly rebuilt its gasworks to facilitate the rebuilding of Atlanta and contributed to the rise of that great city to a major commercial center in the Southeast. In the 1920s, it invested in the State of Georgia's future by creating the infrastructure necessary to allow natural gas to flow under the city streets and into homes, ending the need to manufacture gas and expanding the use of gas throughout the Southeast region. In the early 20th century, it began expanding its services to cities and towns throughout the State of Georgia.

Atlanta Gas Light has faithfully served the State of Georgia and its citizens for each of its 150 years, delivering natural gas to customers throughout the State safely and reliably. This great company and its top-notch employees deserve special recognition. They have contributed millions of dollars and hours to improve the communities in which they work and live.

Atlanta Gas Light and its Georgia parent, AGL Resources, continue to provide exemplary service to their customers and remain a vital part of the economic development of the State of Georgia. I am pleased to take this opportunity to commemorate the contributions and services rendered by Atlanta Gas Light in its 150 years of operation and look forward to its continued service for the next 150 years.●

CONGRATULATING MS. SARA J. KIEFFNER

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I rise to congratulate Ms. Sara J.